

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-5 (cancelled)

Claim 6 (previously presented): A high-speed mail sorting apparatus for automated screening of parcels to identify parcels likely to contain biological or non-biological contaminants, comprising:

a parcel opener for creating an opening in each parcel, wherein the opening is created in a predetermined position to eject contaminants from the parcel in a predetermined direction;

a pinch roller for compressing the opened parcel;

an air duct for channeling an air flow over the opened parcel as the opened parcel is compressed; and

a particulate sampler for analyzing the air flow to detect whether the opened parcel is likely to contain contaminants; and

a puff detector for recording and comparing a series of digital images in the predetermined direction to determine whether the parcel is likely to contain contaminants.

Claims 7-9 (cancelled)

Claim 10 (previously presented): A high-speed mail sorting apparatus for automated screening of parcels to identify parcels likely to contain biological or non-biological contaminants, comprising:

a rotary puncher for creating an opening in each parcel;

a pinch roller for compressing the opened parcel;

an air duct for channeling an air flow over the opened parcel as the opened parcel is compressed; and

a particulate sampler for analyzing the air flow to detect whether the opened parcel is likely to contain contaminants, wherein the rotary puncher comprises a cutting disk which is integral with the pinch roller.

Claim 11 (original): The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the cutting disk includes a row of spikes protruding beyond an outer circumference of the pinch roller.

Claim 12 (original): The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the rotary puncher creates a plurality of openings in the parcel, wherein the plurality of openings are arranged in a row along the parcel.

Claims 13-14 (cancelled)

Claim 15 (original): A high-speed mail sorting apparatus for automated screening of parcels to identify parcels likely to contain biological or non-biological contaminants, comprising:

a parcel opener for creating an opening on each parcel in a predetermined position;
a pinch roller for compressing each opened parcel and ejecting contaminants from the opened parcel in a predetermined direction; and
a puff detector for recording a series of digital images as each opened parcel is compressed, wherein each of the series of digital images is taken in the predetermined direction, and for comparing the series of digital images to determine whether the opened parcel is likely to contain contaminants.

Claims 16-20 (cancelled)

Claim 21 (previously presented): A method for automated screening of parcels sorted by a high speed mail sorting apparatus to identify parcels likely to contain contaminants, comprising the steps of:

opening each parcel;
utilizing a pinch roller to compress each opened parcel, wherein each parcel is opened by creating a plurality of holes in each parcel in a plurality of predetermined

positions and wherein the compressing ejects, in a predetermined direction, contaminants from each parcel;

creating an air flow over the pinch roller; and

analyzing the air flow to detect whether the opened parcel is likely to contain contaminants, wherein the analyzing step further includes:

recording a series of digital images taken in the predetermined direction as the opened parcel is compressed; and

comparing the series of digital images to determine whether the opened parcel is suspected of containing contaminants.